



**EUROPARC Federation  
Report to Council  
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**Title:**

Summary CharterPartIII Spain

**Recommendations:**

For information



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**PROPOSAL FOR AN ADHERENCE SYSTEM FOR  
TRAVEL AGENCIES  
TO IMPLEMENT THE PART III  
OF THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR SUSTAINABLE  
TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS**

**METHODOLOGY PROPOSED BY EUROPARC-SPAIN TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN SPAIN**





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This document summarizes the methodology proposed by EUROPARC-Spain for the implementation of the Charter Part III in Spain.

The methodology has been developed from the base of the French methodology that has been adapted to the reality of Spain. It has been elaborated through an intensive participatory process that started in June 2014 and ended in July 2015 by sending the proposal to the EUROPARC Federation.

During this period EUROPARC-Spain has coordinated and dinamized a Working Group formed by 30 persons as representatives of:

- EUROPARC-Spain.
- Regional and national tourism administrations.
- Managers and technicians of Charter Parks (Charter Part I).
- Representatives of tourism businesses (tourism businesses associations, Charter Forums, etc.).
- Charter Partner Businesses individually (Charter Part I).
- Travel agencies.

## 1. SCOPE OF THE ADHERENCE SYSTEM

### 1.1 OBJECTIVES

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- **Encourage marketing** of tourism in protected areas that respects the principles of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, and therefore contributes to conservation and local development.
- **Contribute to the recognition of the benefits** of this specific tourism offer for conservation and local development.
- **Improve the visibility and recognition** of the Charter Areas and the Charter Partner Businesses that committed to sustainable tourism.
- **Recognize and differentiate the travel agencies** for their commitment to sustainable tourism in the protected areas in which they operate, giving them the opportunity to collaborate with environmental authorities and local stakeholders, and to benefit from working together on the preparation of unique and attractive bids for tourists.



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## 1.2 TARGET BUSINESSES

The companies that could adhere to the Charter Part III are the travel agencies<sup>1</sup> that fulfil the requirements and complete the process of the Adherence System.

The entire company will adhere to the Charter Part III – as a Charter Partner – and could communicate so, but in terms of the publicity of tourism products the travel agency can only show the Charter logo on those products that are developed in Charter protected areas with whom they have a partnership agreement (Part III) and that involve Charter Partner businesses (Part II).

The EUROPARC Federation will be in charge of defining the conditions of use of the Charter Logo by the travel agencies adhered to Charter Part III. These conditions will be included in the “Partnership Agreement”.

**NOTE:** The section 1.2 has been the outcome of a major debate within the Working Group.

Since the methodology includes reviewing and improving the management of the travel agency and its activities (diagnosis, improvement plan, etc.), it is relevant to consider the travel agency as a Charter Partner. It is important that the efforts of the travel agency are recognized by the Europarc Federation, the Sections and the Charter Parks, and there should be a list or a register of travel agencies adhered to the Charter so that other Charter Parks can implement and further develop the Charter Part III.

Although, regarding products advertising in web pages and travel brochures, the travel agency can only put the Charter logo on the products designed in collaboration with the protected areas that meet the established criteria. In fact, this methodology enhances a differentiated advertising for the Charter products.

## 1.3 TERRITORIAL SCOPE

The companies that could adhere to the Charter Part III are the travel agencies whose applications are submitted by a Spanish Charter Park that has also implemented the Charter Part II, i.e., it counts with Charter Partner Businesses.

<sup>1</sup> (*Attending to the Spanish legislation*) It is considered as “travel agency” an enterprise engaged in providing mediation for any tourist service, as well as organization, supply and / or marketing of travel packages or other individual travel services, and that may use its own resources to provide such services.

According to the law “RDL 1/2007” it is meant by “travel package” the combination of at least two of the elements outlined in the following paragraphs, sold or offered for sale at an inclusive price and when the service exceeds 24 hours or includes an overnight stay:

- i) transport,
- ii) accommodation,
- iii) other tourist services not ancillary to transport or accommodation that are a significant part of the package.



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## **1.4 ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DIFFERENT ENTITIES INVOLVED**

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### **EUROPARC-Spain**

- Be the guarantor of the System and its implementation in Spain.
- Provide the necessary documentation to the protected areas interested in implementing the Charter Part III.
- Provide information to the travel agencies interested in adhere to the Charter Part III in Spain.
- Coordinate the Joint Committee for the Evaluation of the Charter Part III in Spain.
- Validate the adhesion of travel agencies - after hearing the comments and contributions of the Joint Evaluation Committee - and to deliver the “Certificate of Adherence”.
- Coordinate, monitor and disseminate the evolution of the Adherence System in Spain.
- Include on its website the list of travel agencies adhered to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Spain (Part III).
- Enhance the coordination with the EUROPARC Federation and its Sections in order to promote the development of the Charter Part III in Europe and achieve its goals.

### **The protected areas<sup>2</sup>:**

- Submit the applications from the travel agencies, establish partnership agreements with them and monitor those partnership agreements.
- Provide the necessary information to the travel agencies for their adhesion to the Charter Part III – information about the System, the protected area and the Charter Partner Businesses - and make an initial evaluation of the activities of the travel agency.
- Keep EUROPARC-Spain informed about the implementation of the Improvement and Partnership Agreement signed with the travel agency and, in particular, the adequacy of the activities of the travel agency with the conservation objectives of the protected area .
- Review the adequacy of the tourism products designed and marketed by the travel agency in the Charter Area .

### **Travel agencies:**

- They are the recipients and beneficiaries of the Adherence System.

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<sup>2</sup> The functions described here are responsibility of the protected area but they may be taken up and developed by the Charter Forum - provided that the Forum has an adequate level of consolidation and operation- or other entity to whom the Protected Area and the Forum may delegate as, for example, a business association.



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- They must comply with the requirements of the System to adhere to the Charter Part III.

**Rural development Groups, local cooperation entities and its networks.**

**Charter Forums and other Charter Partners entities (businesses associations).**

**Ministry of Tourism.**

**Regional and provincial tourism administrations.**

**TUREBE, the managing entity of the Ecotourism Club in Spain and other entities that recognize the Charter.**

**EUROPARC-FEDERATION**

- Be the guarantor of the Charter Part III and its implementation in Europe.
- Coordinate, monitor and disseminate the evolution of the Charter Part III in Europe.
- Provide the necessary information to the Spanish and foreign travel agencies interested in joining the Charter Part III.
- Promote and disseminate the travel agencies adhered to the Charter Part III and the Charter tourism products they sell.
- Include on its website the list of travel agencies adhered to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (Part III) and disseminate the Charter products they sell.
- Involve the adhered travel agencies into the European Charter Network.
- Create an on-line "travel market" with customers databases and organise meetings and workshops at European level for the adhered travel agencies

**1.5 VALIDITY OF THE ADHERENCE**

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The "Certificate of Adherence" of the travel agency shall be valid for three years.

If in the course of those three years the protected area does not renew its Charter Award, the travel agency will maintain its adherence until the date of validity of its certificate, but after that the travel agency should sign a "Partnership Agreement" with other Charter protected area.

If in the course of the three years EUROPARC-Spain or the protected area have objective evidence that the travel agency is not fulfilling its commitments, the adherence of the travel agency to the Charter could be invalidated and the certificate could be withdrawn.



## 2. PRIOR CONDITIONS

### 2.1 PRIOR CONDITIONS TO BE MET BY THE PROTECTED AREAS

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The protected areas that wish to propose the adherence of a travel agency to Charter Part III or to sign a Partnership Agreement with a travel agency already adhered must:

- **Be awarded** with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas by the EUROPARC Federation.
- **Have implemented the Charter Part II**, and have, therefore, local tourism businesses adhered to the Charter.

### 2.2 PRIOR CONDITIONS TO BE MET BY THE TRAVEL AGENCIES

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The travel agency that wants to join the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism shall:

- Have a travel agency license in force or a document certifying its registration in the corresponding Tourism Register.
- **Comply** with the applicable **legislation**.
- **Develop its activities** in accordance with the **Charter Principles**.
- The **activities** of travel agencies in the protected area must be **compatible** with the management plans and sustainable tourism strategy.

## 3. THE ADHERENCE PROCESS

The adherence process is divided into four compulsory phases and a voluntary one:

- Phase 0: Communication to EUROPARC-Spain the beginning of the process
- Phase 1: Identification of the travel agency by the protected area
- Phase 2: Validation by EUROPARC-Spain
- Phase 3: Collaboration with the protected area
- Phase 4 (voluntary): Collaboration with other protected areas



### **3.0 COMMUNICATION TO EUROPARC-SPAIN THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS**

The protected area that is going to start the process of identifying a travel agency for its adherence to the Charter will communicate it to EUROPARC-Spain, reporting the name of the travel agency and its location (region or country).

### **3.1 IDENTIFICATION OF THE TRAVEL AGENCY BY THE PROTECTED AREA**

The Charter Park identifies a travel agency interested in joining the Charter Part III (on its own initiative or by initiative of the Forum or any of its members).

The **protected area** will provide the following information to the travel agency:

- The official text of the Charter.
- The text of the Adherence System to implement the Charter Part III in Spain.
- Basic information about the protected area.
- Information about the Charter Partner businesses in the protected areas.

The **travel agency** will provide the following information to the protected area:

- Document for the identification of the travel agency and for the submission of the application (Annex 1).
- Diagnosis of the travel agency (Annex 2)
- A statement regarding the compliance with the applicable legislation (Annex 3)
- Optional documents of the travel agency (promotional documents, contracts, etc.)

The protected area - in collaboration with the Forum - must review the contents of the diagnosis provided by the travel agency.

Finally, the protected area will send to EUROPARC-Spain the complete application dossier of the travel agency containing:

- The document for the identification of the travel agency and for the submission of the application (Annex 1), completed by the protected area.
- The diagnosis of the travel agency (Annex 2)
- The statement of the travel agency regarding the compliance with the applicable legislation (Annex 3)
- Additional documents of the travel agency (promotional documents, contracts, certificates, etc.)
- Application letter of the travel agency for the adherence to the Charter Part III (model in Annex 4).





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### **3.2 VALIDATION BY EUROPARC-SPAIN**

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EUROPARC-Spain receives the application dossier, reviews it and sends it to the members of the Joint Committee for the Evaluation of the Charter Part III formed by:

- A representative of EUROPARC-Spain.
- A representative of the Ministry of Tourism.
- A representative of a regional tourism administration.
- A representative of a protected area awarded with the Charter
- A representative of TUREBE, the managing entity of the Ecotourism Club in Spain (representing tourism businesses).
- A representative of a travel agency.

Each of the mentioned entities will appoint a representative to become part of the Joint Committee which will meet three times a year to evaluate the applications received. EUROPARC-Spain is responsible for making the final decision to validate, postpone or refuse the adherence of the travel agency, taking into account the comments and contributions of the Joint Evaluation Committee.

When the decision is finally positive, EUROPARC-Spain registers the applicant on the National Register of travel agencies adhered to the Charter Part III and provides the necessary information to the EUROPARC Federation to proceed with the registration also at European level.

To proceed with the validation of the application and the registration in the National Register of travel agencies adhered to the Charter Part III, the travel agency must pay to EUROPARC-Spain a fee of € 300. The travel agency will have to pay this fee every 3 years to renew its registration.

### **3.3 COLLABORATION**

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Once the adherence of the travel agency has been validated by EUROPARC-Spain, the protected area and the travel agency draw up an “**Improvement and Partnership Agreement**” for the next three years (*Acuerdo de Mejora y Colaboración*) (Annex 5). This Partnership Agreement should at least contain joint actions to:

1. **Design and / or market** ecotourism products in the protected area.
2. **Support conservation and local development** in the Charter Area
3. Continuously improve the **sustainable management** of the travel agency.
4. Ensure proper **communication** and transmission of information between the travel agency and the protected area.



Some **criteria and guidelines** for the definition of each of these lines of collaboration are mentioned below:

**1. Design and / or market ecotourism products in the protected area**

**Ecotourism products** designed and promoted under the framework of the Charter Part III must meet, as far as possible, the following criteria:

- Be based on the discovery of the Charter Area and its natural and cultural values, with an important component of communication and interpretation of those values.
- Be formed by services of the Charter Partner Businesses in the territory (Charter Part II). Only when a service cannot be offered by a Charter company, the travel agency may include other companies but always attending to sustainability criteria.
- Promote a respectful tourist behaviour towards natural and cultural resources and the local community.
- Cover different themes: ecotourism, agrotourism and traditional products, and cultural and historical heritage.
- Avoid bringing customers to the more sensitive or crowded areas, and to minimize the impacts of the activities.
- Contribute to improving the quality of life of the local community and to have a positive impact on the local economy.
- Promote a balanced development of the territory, covering all activities and services in the municipalities where there are Charter Partner Businesses.

**2. Support conservation and local development in the Charter Area:**

- Support monitoring and conservation activities of the natural and cultural heritage of the protected area.
- Support economic development activities in collaboration with local stakeholders.

**3. Continuously improve the management of the travel agency** applying sustainable development criteria in its activities and developing actions for environmental, social and economic improvement of the company.

**4. Ensure proper communication** and transmission of information between the travel agency and the protected area. To do this, the following actions are suggested to be performed by the travel agency:

- Provide information about any incidents detected during the activities.



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- Provide information about the Charter Ecotourism Products sold, type of customers and their satisfaction.
- Report about the outcome of the actions committed by the travel agency within the Partnership Agreement.

For its part, the **protected area** and the local partners of the Sustainable Tourism Forum will develop actions to support the travel agency, such as:

- To give **support to design** the ecotourism products
- To facilitate the use of the **public facilities** of the protected area and the territory.
- To facilitate **research trips** for the travel agencies adhered.
- To **disseminate** the travel agency and the ecotourism products designed.
- To support the **identification of possible collaborative actions** to contribute to conservation and local development.
- To provide **training** on the protected area and the whole Charter Area for the personnel of the travel agency.
- Provide updated **information** on the protected area

When the “Improvement and Partnership Agreement” is drawn up and signed, the protected area sends it to EUROPARC-Spain and the collaboration phase begins. The collaboration will last three years.

Once EUROPARC-Spain receives and reviews the Partnership Agreement, delivers the the “Certificate of Adherence” of the travel agency, a document that guarantees that a travel agency is adhered to Charter and collaborates with the protected area that presented the candidacy. In Annex 6 there is a model of the “Certificate of Adherence”.

The protected area and the travel agency jointly will prepare an annual report of the results of the actions developed and will send it to EUROPARC-Spain. The report shall specify:

- The actions developed by the protected area and its local partners and the results.
- The actions carried out by the travel agency, indicating at least:
  - o Number and type of Ecotourism products designed (travel brochure)
  - o Number of those travels sold (number of customers)
  - o Number and type of promotional activities of those products.
  - o Actions developed to support conservation and local developments, and results.
  - o Actions to improve sustainable management of the travel agency, and results.
  - o Actions to improve communication and information sharing with the protected area.



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### **3.4. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER PROTECTED AREAS**

When a travel agency is adhered to the Charter Part III in Spain or in another country, the travel agency can start working with other Charter Park in Spain that has already implemented the Charter Part II by establishing an “Improvement and Partnership Agreement” (Annex 5) as it is established in section 4.3. In this case the travel agency will not need to perform phases 4.0, 4.1 and 4.2.

The Charter Park will send the Agreement to EUROPARC-Spain whom will validate it and thereafter the ecotourism products designed with Charter Partner Businesses in this Charter Park could have the distinction of the Charter. In this case, it will also be necessary to prepare and send an annual report and a final evaluation of three years of collaboration.

## **4. RENEWAL PROCESS**

At the end of three years of collaboration, the protected area and the travel agency will prepare a final evaluation report and a new Partnership Agreement for the next three years. To renew the adherence of the travel agency to the Charter Part III the protected area will send to EUROPARC-Spain the following documentation:

- Final evaluation report with the results of the collaboration during the three years.
- Dossier of the ecotourism products designed and marketed under the Charter framework.
- A new “Improvement and Partnership Agreement” for the next three years (Annex 5)

EUROPARC-Spain will review renewal dossier , will send it to the Joint Committee for the Evaluation of the Charter Part III in Spain, and will follow the procedure established in section 4.2 to make the decision and to inform the interested parties about the outcome.

Then EUROPARC-Spain will issue a new “Certificate of Adherence” for the travel agency and will update the National Register of the Charter Part III. The travel agency previously have to pay the fee of € 300.